

REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action dated January 6, 2009. Claims 1 to 15 are pending in the application, of which Claims 1, 11, 14 and 15 are independent. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

Claims 1 to 3, 8, 11, 14 and 15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over U.S. Published Appln. No. 2001/0046065 (Furukawwa) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,134,568 (Tonkin), and in further view of U.S. Published Appln. No. 2001/0044868 (Roztocil). Claims 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 13 and 13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Furukawa in view of Tonkin, and in further view of Roztocil and U.S. Published Appln. No. 2003/0206314 (Tanimoto). Claim 6 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Furukawa and Tonkin in view of Roztocil, and in further view of U.S. Patent No. 6,128,451 (Fukuchi). Reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested.

The present invention concerns an apparatus or method that displays a process flow list for a plurality of procedures of a printing job. The procedures are included in a printing job and may be executed on a combination of devices in sequence or by a user in order to satisfy the requirements of the printing job. Such a display list allows a user who has instructed the printing job to easily confirm or understand the process flow used to execute the printing job using the combination of devices and the operations in one or more devices that the user is to perform. As the result, the user can effectively handle the printing job as the process flow list allows the user to easily understand to which subsequent device the user should move the print product printed by the a previous device.

Turning to specific claim language, amended independent Claim 1 is directed to a printing control apparatus which performs a printing process employing a plurality of printing devices. The apparatus includes a printing attribute acquisition unit configured to acquire an attribute of a printing job to be processed; an adaptive environment determination unit configured to obtain a device combination capable of executing the printing job based on performance information representing at least performance of each of the plurality of printing devices and the acquired attribute of the printing job, the device combination including a first device and a second device which executes a process using a print product printed by the first device; and a display unit configured to display a process flow list representing a process flow to execute the printing job by employing the device combinations obtained by the adaptive environment determination unit and an operation to be performed by a user in the second device. The process flow list is a list in which a plurality of procedures which constitute the printing job are listed in the order of execution, and the plurality of procedures include a work procedure in which a user moves the print product printed by the first device from the first device to the second device and process procedures to be performed by respective devices included in the device combination obtained by the adaptive environment determination unit.

Applicant respectfully submits that the cited references, namely Furukawa, Tonkin and Roztocil, whether considered alone or in combination, fail to disclose or suggest all of the features of the apparatus of Claim 1. In particular, the cited references, either alone or in combination, fail to disclose or suggest at least the features of a display unit configured to display a process flow list representing a process flow to execute the printing job by employing device combinations obtained by an adaptive environment determination unit and an operation to be performed by a user in a second device.

In contrast to the present invention, Furukawa merely describes an information list 10 including locations and speeds of available printers. The information list 10 is displayed and a user can select one or more desired printers based on an analysis of the printer information. The printers selected by the user are displayed in a different manner from that of the non-selected printers. As clearly described in Paragraph [0097] of Furukawa, the selected printers execute the same procedure in parallel. However, the manner in which the printers are displayed is not related at all to an execution order nor is the manner of display related to the use of combined devices in order to complete a printing job as featured in the present claims. Accordingly, Furukawa fails to disclose or suggest obtaining a device combination in which a first and second printing devices are included as well as displaying a process flow list representing a process flow to execute the printing job by employing the device combinations and an operation to be performed by a user in the second device.

Furthermore, while Tonkin discloses displaying a print preview with positions at which a printed document is to be bound, a user cannot recognize, from the print preview, when they should bind the document. This is because Tonkin does not display a process flow having process steps to the user as Tonkin is entirely silent about any printing procedures in which a print product printed by one printer is used in a process in another printer.

Finally, Roztocil discloses a work flow for processing a plurality of instructions based on a “job ticket” that represents the instructions. Roztocil further discloses that the work flow may include a user process, such as a manual transfer of a partially finished document output by an output device to a binding machine.

However, the “job ticket” Roztocil merely indicates a suggestion to a human of the requirements of a work flow. Roztocil never discloses nor suggests generating and

displaying a process flow list representing a process flow used to execute a print job by employing a combination of the output device and the binding machine. Moreover, Roztocil never suggests displaying any user operation to perform in the binding machine.

Applicants have reviewed the remaining references, namely Tanimoto and Fukuchi, and submit that neither reference discloses or suggests that which is missing from any permissible combination of Furukawa, Tonkin and Roztocil, namely display of a process flow list representing a process flow to execute the printing job by employing the device combinations obtained by the adaptive environment determination unit and an operation to be performed by a user in the second device.

In light of the deficiencies of Furukawa, Tonkin and Roztocil as discussed above, Applicants submit that amended independent Claim 1 is now in condition for allowance and respectfully request same.

Amended independent Claims 11, 14 and 15 are directed to a method, a computer-readable medium and a computer program product , respectively, substantially in accordance with the apparatus of Claim 1. Accordingly, Applicants submit that Claims 11, 14 and 15 are also now in condition for allowance and respectfully request same.

The other pending claims in this application are each dependent from the independent claims discussed above and are therefore believed allowable for at least the same reasons. Because each dependent claim is also deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, however, the individual consideration of each dependent claim on its own merits is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, the entire application is believed to be in condition for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested at the Examiner's earliest convenience.

CONCLUSION

The Director is authorized to charge the \$490 two-month extension to Deposit Account No. 50-3939. The Director is further authorized to charge any deficiency or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 06-1205.

No claim fees are believed due; however, should it be determined that additional claim fees are required, the Director is hereby authorized to charge such fees to Deposit Account 06-1205.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Costa Mesa, CA office at (714) 540-8700. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

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